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# Magnanimous Man in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas

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THE MAGNANIMOUS MAN IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF  
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of Master  
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## INTRODUCTION

It is our contention that the essential difference which separates and divides human beings is still, and always will be, spiritual, in whatever material guise it is presented, and that, whether we recognize it or ignore it, all the more immediate, obvious differences ultimately depend upon one: acceptance or rejection of belief in God in the full sense and meaning that this implies. It is our contention that the difference implied in men's different attitudes to God is fundamental; that men's attitudes on this ultimate, fundamental question determine the whole direction of living in all its aspects and in all relations, and that opposition in this one decisive matter implies secondary, but resultant opposition in outlook and value throughout all of life.

As an illustration of this thesis we propose the case of the Magnanimous Man, or, we should say, the Magnanimous Men, for there are two of them. There is the Magnanimous Man of the Nicomachean Ethics, the product of Aristotle, and there is the Magnanimous Man of the Summa Theologica, the product of St. Thomas Aquinas. The treasure of the former is in this world; the treasure of the latter is in the next. Where their treasure is, there is their conflict. This will become apparent as the character of each is investigated.

In any consideration of this nature, it is impossible to be quite impartial. If we have thought about the matter, we have inevitably come to some conclusions; we are bound to range ourselves on one side or the other; yet if

our discussion is to serve any purpose we must endeavor to state the issues fairly.

The Magnanimous Man is at once a philosophical and historical problem. There is no doubt that the Aristotelian Magnanimous Man is the predecessor and type of his Thomistic counterpart. The relation is obvious and repeatedly acknowledged. The problem lies rather in breaking away from the habit of looking on the Magnanimous Man of Aristotle simply as a predecessor. Unless we avoid this error he will have no significance except in relation to the man he becomes in the Thomistic synthesis. His own personality will be lost, submerged in that of another. This thought is admirably expressed by Dr. Pegis in his masterful study, St. Thomas and the Greeks.

To look on them (the Greeks) as the predecessors of Christian thought is, in part, to look on them out of focus. It is to look on them from a standpoint which is not their own. That is like saying that one must look at Greek philosophy with Christian eyes in order to understand what the Greeks were talking about.<sup>1</sup>

St. Thomas Aquinas was a Christian philosopher. The Magnanimous Man of the Summa Theologica will be a Christian. Aristotle was a pagan philosopher. The Magnanimous Man of the Nicomachean Ethics will be a pagan. This does not mean that the two will have no intercourse. It does mean that we must heed the warning of Etienne Gilson and not "baptize Aristotle in order to discuss philosophy with him."<sup>2</sup>

After we have seen each Magnanimous Man in his own historical and philo-

<sup>1</sup>Anton C. Pegis. St. Thomas and the Greeks, Aquinas lectures, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, 1939, 16-17.

<sup>2</sup>Etienne Gilson. The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1940, 8.

sophical setting and interpreted his conduct and actions in this same light it will be an essential part of our study to note the differences between the two.

## CHAPTER I

### THE MAGNANIMOUS MAN IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ARISTOTLE

The Magnanimous Man, as his name implies, is concerned with great things.<sup>1</sup> In introducing him Aristotle tells us no more than this, preferring to present him in contrast with some of his fellows, that by looking at them and observing their actions we may see for ourselves and judge of him.

First there is the temperate man. It takes no great discernment to distinguish him from the Magnanimous Man. He thinks himself worth little and rightly. He is not worth much. There is no greatness in his deeds nor in his deserts. He is not envious of the Magnanimous Man: envy, which is pain at the sight of good fortune, a man feels towards his equals.<sup>2</sup> The temperate man acknowledges his inferiority.

Not so the vain man. The Magnanimous Man has what he has not and he is envious. He thinks himself the equal of the Magnanimous Man. He yearns for reputation, honor, fame and fortune. He wants them for himself and thinks that he is entitled to them. Like the Magnanimous Man he seems to tend to great things, but in reality he is a man out of his depth. He does not know himself. In his attempt to equal the Magnanimous Man's claim to great things and his possession of honor he flounders and blusters. He has such a magni-

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<sup>1</sup>Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics, In the Basic Works of Aristotle, Richard McKeon, ed., W. D. Ross, tr. New York: Random House, 1941. IV, iii, 1123 a 34.

<sup>2</sup>Rhet. II, x, 1387 b 23.

fied opinion of his own excellence and ability that he oversteps it. The vain man dares not show himself for what he really is but affects an ostentatious show; he needs must masquerade as magnanimous.

This is not the case with the pusillanimous man. His little soul shrivels even more in the face of greatness. He under-estimates his own power and over-estimates the greatness of the work that faces him. That he differs from the Magnanimous Man is obvious. Pusillanimity and magnanimity differ as littleness and greatness. Just as the Magnanimous Man tends to great things out of greatness of soul, so the pusillanimous man shrinks from great things out of littleness of soul. The only justification that can be urged for him is ignorance of his own qualifications and fear of failure. He seems not to know himself "else he would have desired the things he was worthy of since these were good."<sup>3</sup>

Neither ignorance nor fear have any place in the life of the Magnanimous Man. He tends to the extreme in respect of the greatness of his claims. He has ability; he recognizes it. But he keeps the mean in respect of the rightness of them. He claims what is in accordance with his merits while the others go to excess or fall short.<sup>4</sup>

We are left with the Magnanimous Man in possession of the great things he claims and deserves. What, then, are these things? Above all things else the Magnanimous Man claims honor.

Desert is relative to external goods; and the greatest of these, we should say, is that which we render to the gods,

<sup>3</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1125 a 22, 23.

<sup>4</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1123 b 13, 14.



and which people of position most aim at, and which is the prize appointed for the noblest deeds.<sup>5</sup>

It is not his claim to honor that distinguishes the Magnanimous Man from the Vain Man and the Pusillanimous Man. They were concerned with honor, too; it is the rightness of his claims that sets him apart. Surely, his claim is just. Honor is the token of a man's being notable for doing good and magnanimity is the virtue that disposes a man to do good on a grand scale.<sup>6</sup>

If we consider him point by point we will see the utter absurdity of a Magnanimous Man who is not good.<sup>7</sup>

If the Magnanimous Man deserves the greatest honors he must be good in the highest degree. The more praiseworthy things are, the nobler and, therefore, the better they are. So it is with things that earn greater honors than others; honor is, as it were, a measure of value. The Magnanimous Man must be good, then, and greatness in every virtue must characterize him.

The first point that illustrates the goodness of the Magnanimous Man is his courage. "It would be unbecoming for the Magnanimous Man to fly from danger, swinging his arms by his sides."<sup>8</sup> And, again,

He does not run into dangers, nor is he fond of danger, because he honors few things; but he will face great dangers, and when he is in danger he is unsparing of his life, knowing that there are conditions on which life is not worth having.<sup>9</sup>

We can judge better of the Magnanimous Man's courage if we investigat  Aris-

<sup>5</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1123 b 16-20.

<sup>6</sup>Rhet. I, v, 1361 a 27; I, ix, 1366 b 16.

<sup>7</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1123 b 33. We shall substitute 'Magnanimous' for 'Proud' which W. D. Ross uses but which he acknowledges (p. 99ln) "has not the etymological associations of 'megalopsychia.'"

<sup>8</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1123 b 32.

<sup>9</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 b 6-8.

totle's requirements, for ordinary courage will not suffice for a man pledged to great things. Being magnanimous he must perform the greatest acts of courage.

Disgrace, poverty, disease, friendlessness, death, are all evils, but the courageous man is not concerned with all of them. To fear some things is right and noble; it would be base not to fear them. Poverty and disease he ought not to fear, nor, in general, the evils that do not flow from vice and which are outside a man's control. But not even the man that is fearless of these is brave. With what sort of terrible things, then, is the brave man concerned? Surely, with the greatest. Now death is the most terrible of evils because it is the end. But the brave man would not seem to be concerned even with death in all circumstances, but only in the noblest. Such a death would be met in face of the greatest and noblest danger. Those who thus lay down their lives are honored in the city-states. Properly speaking, then, he alone can be called truly courageous who is fearless in the face of a noble death and all emergencies that involve death.<sup>10</sup>

This is the condition on which the Magnanimous Man "considers life not worth having" but it does not give us a complete picture of the courage of the Magnanimous Man. Of course he would not shrink from laying down his life; but opportunities of this kind are not daily occurrences and courage is woven into the very texture of his life. The Magnanimous Man "will not run from danger swinging his arms" because fear does not enter into his make-up. A man is afraid when he is at the mercy of another; not so the Magnanimous Man.

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<sup>10</sup>E. N. III, vi, 1115 a 11-32.

Being superior to others, of whom would he be afraid? What could any man do to him that would cause him to fear? A man who has done wrong is afraid; he lives in fear of retaliation.<sup>11</sup> But the Magnanimous Man would never wrong anyone. That would be disgraceful, and why should a man to whom nothing is great do disgraceful acts? Shame would keep him from wronging another and so bringing discredit upon himself; what could ever accrue to him from such a deed that would recompense him for such an evil? Again, our rivals for a thing cause us to fear. But only ambitious men have rivals, men who are striving for something that exceeds their merits but not their desires. These are some of the reasons why ordinary men are fearful. They have no point of application in the case of the Magnanimous Man. In the face of these contingencies he remains calm. When a man is calm and fearless in all circumstances it can be traced to two reasons: first, he may have no experience of the thing at hand. This really is a fact in the case of the Magnanimous Man. The fears that trouble others and cause them to flee are outside his experience. In the second place a man is unafraid if he has the means to deal with the circumstances at hand. The Magnanimous Man feels that he is superior to others in the number and importance of the advantages that make men formidable.<sup>12</sup>

What is true of courage is true of all the virtues, for Magnanimity, being a sort of crown of all the virtues, makes them greater and is not found

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<sup>11</sup>Rhet. II, v. 1382 b 1; E. N. IV, iii, 1123 b 33, 34. "(It would be unbecoming for a Magnanimous Man) to wrong another; for to what end should he do disgraceful acts, he to whom nothing is great."

<sup>12</sup>Rhet. II, v. 1313 a 27 sq.

without them.<sup>13</sup> Because it implies the practice of the greatest acts of all the virtues, magnanimity is difficult, in fact it is impossible, without nobility and goodness of character.<sup>14</sup> When a man performs the greatest acts of justice, courage, temperance, magnificence, liberality, gentleness, prudence and wisdom and performs them not only because they are worthy of praise, but for their own sake, which nobility requires, he has merited his claim to honor.

We might ask what nobility signifies that makes it a requisite quality for the man who would practice the greatest acts of all the virtues. Nobility of character impels a man to perform great acts of virtue simply for the reward of honor, rather than money or any material benefit. It prompts him to perform acts that are desirable for some one else's sake without thinking of his own interests. All actions done for the sake of others and all successes which benefit others are noble since these, less than other actions, are done for one's self. In fine, nobility impels a man to do the opposite of those things which would make him say, do, or intend anything of which he would be ashamed.

Without nobility and goodness of character a man who is directly concerned with honor is in danger of becoming a slave of honor. Not so the Magnanimous Man. Men who are the slaves of honor seek it for its own sake; he is not concerned with honor in that he seeks it as an end. The Magnanimous Man seeks only to be worthy of honor.

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<sup>13</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 a 1, 2.

<sup>14</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 a 3, 4.

At honors that are great and conferred by good men he will be moderately pleased, thinking that he is coming by his own or even less than his own; for there can be no honor that is worthy of perfect virtue, yet he will at any rate accept it since they have nothing greater to bestow on him.<sup>15</sup>

It is costly to labor for such a reward, but the Magnanimous Man will never become the slave of honor simply because he is above honor. Honor and a good reputation are among the most precious things that life can offer him; they are the only things that men can offer. They are an inadequate reward it is true; but the Magnanimous Man is not thinking in terms of reward. He is moderately pleased when he is honored by those whom he considers good judges. His neighbors are better judges than people at a distance; his associates and fellow-countrymen better than strangers; his contemporaries better than posterity; good men are best of all. It is significant that the Magnanimous Man is most pleased with recognition from the prudent man,<sup>16</sup> realizing that honor conferred by a man of such discernment is a true testament of worthiness. The man of practical wisdom, and good men generally, are not likely to be deceived about true virtue nor are they apt to be lavish in their praise. With honor from such as these the Magnanimous Man is moderately pleased. He is only moderately pleased because his attention is centered on great acts of virtue and not on honor. Then, too, the honor of men, even of the prudent man, is not an adequate reward of perfect virtue. And if man has nothing greater to offer, who has? Resignation is not conducive to exuberance.

But honor from casual people and on trifling grounds he will utterly despise, since it is not this that he deserves,

<sup>15</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 a 5-9.

<sup>16</sup>E. N. I, iv, 1095 b 27.

and dishonor too, since in his case it cannot be just.<sup>17</sup>

The Magnanimous Man could not but despise honor and credit bestowed on him by those who are inferior to him. Virtue demands it. Honor is a measure of value. Only the good man, the man practiced in virtue, is capable of a just evaluation. Casual people value honor for its own sake and insult the Magnanimous Man by inferring that their standards are his. He does not consider honor "as if it were a very great thing."<sup>18</sup> After all, what are the honors that men can offer? Sacrifices, commemorations in verse or prose, privileges, grants of land, front seats at civic celebrations, state burial, statues.<sup>19</sup> What are these things that the Magnanimous Man should desire them? What proportion is there between these things and perfect virtue? The man who values honor for its own sake is pleased with recognition from casual people because it makes him see himself in the character of a fine fellow. The Magnanimous Man, knowing his worthiness and the justice of his claims is above such conduct. Such motives as these are unworthy of the Magnanimous Man.

Power and wealth are desirable for the sake of honor (at least those who have them wish to get honor by means of them); and for him to whom even honor is a little thing the others must be so too. Hence Magnanimous Men are thought to be disdainful.<sup>20</sup>

The Magnanimous Man is bound to be misunderstood by his inferiors. Such is often the case with men of virtue. "No man is a prophet in his own coun-

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<sup>17</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 a 11-13.

<sup>18</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 a 16.

<sup>19</sup>Rhet.

<sup>20</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1724 a 17-19.

try" and a man of such perfect virtue as the Magnanimous Man is looked on askance by those not so familiar with virtue and to whom it is a well-merited rebuke. They resent the fact that he is powerful, and completely misinterpret the great deeds that his power permits him to do. Power is a dangerous weapon, in the hands of a man without virtue. The Magnanimous Man realizes that power is a trust. The sense of responsibility makes him serious. He must pay attention to the duties of his position. The respect in which he is held inspires him with dignity; but this dignity is mistaken for disdain and arrogance by his inferiors who do not realize that dignity is a mild and becoming form of arrogance.<sup>21</sup>

Wealth could not be in better hands than those of the Magnanimous Man, but as with power, so with wealth. It is misunderstood by many. The Magnanimous Man is not judged by them by his own standards but by those of the ordinary type of character produced by wealth. People see that wealthy men are insolent, that their possession of wealth goes to their heads. Such men feel that in possessing wealth they have every good thing that exists. They make it a standard of value by which they judge everything else and they think that there is nothing that wealth cannot buy. Such men are luxurious and ostentatious: luxurious because of the way they live and the prosperity they display; ostentatious and vulgar because their minds are regularly occupied with the object of their love and admiration and also because they think that other people's ideas of happiness are the same as their own. It is quite natural that they should think this way, for if a man has money

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<sup>21</sup>Rhet. II, xvii, 1391 a 29.

there are always plenty of people who will come begging from him. In short, the ordinary type of character produced by wealth is that of the prosperous fool.<sup>22</sup>

Casual people, observing these characteristics of wealthy men do not realize that it is wealth without virtue that produces such characters. Wealth places a man in a position of superiority and everything that is superior is held in honor. However, those who have wealth without virtue are neither justified in their claim to honor nor are they magnanimous, for Magnanimity implies perfect virtue.

For without virtue it is not easy to bear gracefully the goods of fortune; and, being unable to bear them, and thinking themselves superior to others, they despise others, and themselves do what they please. They imitate the Magnanimous Man without being like him.<sup>23</sup>

With wealth the Magnanimous Man can act expeditiously. Virtue needs external good for it is impossible, or not easy, to do great deeds without the proper equipment. It takes money to produce great works. Friends, riches and power, while not essential to the Magnanimous Man, are instruments of which he makes good use. With them he can effect must that without them he would be powerless to bring about. He despises them in as much as he does not think them so great as to do anything unbecoming for their sake. On the other hand he prizes them in so far as they are useful for the accomplishment of virtuous deeds. If a man does not think much of a thing, he is neither very joyful at obtaining it, nor very grieved at losing it.

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<sup>22</sup>Rhet. II, xv, 1390 b 31 sq.

<sup>23</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 a 30; 1124 b 2.



The Magnanimous Man despises the "prosperous fool" for his vulgarity. He himself is educated in riches. He "bears gracefully the good of fortune." It would be unthinkable that the Magnanimous Man would use his wealth in vulgar ostentation. It is true that he "possesses beautiful and profitless things rather than profitable and useful ones";<sup>24</sup> these are more fitting than others for a gentleman.<sup>25</sup> Those things are particularly good which are a man's very own, which no one else possesses. There is no distinction in having the things which everyone has. Practical things may be had by one's equals and even by one's inferiors. Their possession is an admission of dependence,--not "proper to a character that suffices to itself."<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the possession of beautiful and profitless things is not vulgar ostentation. Like great deeds, beautiful things are rare.

The Magnanimous Man uses his wealth virtuously. Wealth used virtuously is employed in providing and preserving good things; magnanimity disposes a man to do good to others on a grand scale.

He is the sort of man to confer benefits; but is ashamed of receiving them; for the one is the mark of a superior and the other of an inferior.<sup>27</sup>

The Magnanimous Man is quick to see the needs of others and to supply them their wants. It is a mark of a virtuous man to provide for others. Besides, to confer a benefit implies both possession and superiority. A man cannot give what he does not possess; he who can supply what is lacking to others is

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<sup>24</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1125 a 12, 13.

<sup>25</sup>Rhet. I, ix, 1367 a 27.

<sup>26</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1125 a 13.

<sup>27</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 b 9, 10.

their superior. The Magnanimous Man is ashamed of receiving benefits because it is a mark of inferiority, an acknowledgment of need. For the most part he is safeguarded against such a humiliation because what need could a Magnanimous Man possibly have, and, granting that he did stand in need of something, who would there be who could fulfill it?

However, should it happen that he were forestalled in beneficence by another, the Magnanimous Man is quick to recover his position of superiority.

He is apt to confer greater benefits in return; for thus the original benefactor besides being paid a debt will be the gainer by the transaction.<sup>28</sup>

Generosity is one of the virtues in which the Magnanimous Man excels. In the event that another had benefited him it would be niggardly and unbecoming a man of his position if he were careful to return the benefit in kind and exactly. In that case the act would be a mere return and not a kindness. Rather, it would be more fitting that he outdo his benefactor for this would not only be in accordance with generosity, but more especially it would be more in keeping with his position.

Some hold it against Magnanimous Men that

They seem to remember any service they have done, but not those they have received (for he who received a service is inferior to him who has done it, but the Magnanimous Man wishes to be superior), and to hear of the former with pleasure and the latter with displeasure.<sup>29</sup>

This charge is true but needs some explanation. He remembers the services he has rendered because he delights in fulfilling the needs of others. Such op-

<sup>28</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 b 11-13.

<sup>29</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 b 13-15.

portunities give him real joy. They are so many occasions of exercising virtue and of living up to his position. One remembers events that are joyous and gratifying. The Magnanimous Man is not the only one who remembers these services. The recipients are likewise mindful of the favors done them, of the need that was supplied. Men have a way of remembering those who have alleviated their sufferings or in any way helped them. The Magnanimous Man is not mindful of the services that he has received, for these services did not fulfill any real need, much less any desire. He accepted them, it is true; it would have been unbecoming to refuse others these little opportunities of gratification; but once the debt is repaid in abundance, why should he be mindful of it?

It is a mark of the Magnanimous Man . . . to be dignified toward people who enjoy high position and good fortune, but unassuming towards those of the middle class; for it is a difficult and lofty thing to be superior to the former, but easy to be so to the latter, and a lofty bearing over the former is no mark of ill-breeding, but among humble people it is as vulgar as a display of strength against the weak.<sup>30</sup>

This attitude is especially characteristic of the Magnanimous Man. He is guided by good taste, a sense of what should be done, of what is fitting. To adopt a deferential attitude toward people in high positions would be as great a breach of etiquette, as great a mark of ill-breeding, as to adopt a lofty attitude toward the lowly. He demands and must demand deference as his due; he does not assert himself; is not aggressive; he is simply conscious of his own worth and of his duty to himself and his position.

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<sup>30</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 b 17-23.

Again, it is characteristic of the Magnanimous Man not to aim at things commonly held in honor, or the things in which others excel; to be sluggish and to hold back except where great honor or a great work is at stake, and to be a man of few deeds but of great and notable ones.<sup>31</sup>

These characteristics should not cause surprise. No one hires an army of men to do a piece of work that could be done by one man. To what purpose would the Magnanimous Man waste his time over works in which most others could succeed? He is not concerned with many works but with great works. Let others do the works that are proportioned to their talents and abilities. When the work is one that is equal to his merits and in conformity with his position the Magnanimous Man will readily undertake it. Obviously, such tasks are not numerous.

The next point in the character of the Magnanimous Man which Aristotle presents has to do with his intercourse with others.

He must also be open in his hate and in his love (for to conceal one's feelings, i.e., to care less for truth than for what people will think, is a coward's part), and must speak and act openly; for he is free of speech because he is contemptuous, and is given to telling the truth, except when in irony he speaks to the vulgar.<sup>32</sup>

The reason which Aristotle gives "because he is contemptuous" could not be more indicative. A man feels contempt for what he considers unimportant.<sup>33</sup> What other people think just does not matter to the Magnanimous Man. Human respect is paralysing. Why should the Magnanimous Man conceal his hates or loves? What difference does it make to him whether others agree with him or

<sup>31</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 b 23-27.

<sup>32</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1124 b 27-30.

<sup>33</sup>Rhet. II, ii, 1387 b 15.

not? He is a man of decided opinions. He hates what is vulgar, what is bad form, and he doesn't care who knows it, least of all those who offend in these respects.

Nor is he mindful of wrongs; for it is not the part of a Magnanimous Man to have a long memory, especially for wrongs, but to overlook them.<sup>34</sup>

The same motive is at work here. The Magnanimous Man is not mindful of wrongs because he considers them unimportant. Why should he stop over them? One only remembers the things that one considers important. It would be unseemly for a man to whom the greatest honor and even dishonor is as nothing, to fret over trifles; for a man of few and notable deeds to concentrate on something so insignificant. To do so would be to invest them with an importance that they could never merit.

Nor is he a gossip; for he will neither speak about himself nor about another, since he cares not to be praised nor for others to be blamed.<sup>35</sup>

That the Magnanimous Man would not talk about himself goes without saying. In the first place it would be bad form, unworthy a man of his position. Secondly, and more obviously, the Magnanimous Man doesn't have to talk about himself. His notable deeds, his goodness and nobility of character, his perfect virtue, speak for him. What is more, he would be drawing attention to the inferiority of others, which would be unkind. Those who talk about themselves have no other means of drawing attention to themselves. They must be their own press agents.

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<sup>34</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1125 a 3, 5.

<sup>35</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1125 a 5-7.

Nor is the Magnanimous Man a gossip. The small talk and choice bits of the gossip mongers are utterly beneath him. Gossip and much talking about others often results in others being blamed. Even though others do not equal him in virtue the Magnanimous Man wants them to have their due. Those who try to get others blamed are trying to thwart them because they consider them rivals. The Magnanimous Man has no rivals. These others cannot do him any good nor can they do him any harm. Why should he talk about them at all? Why should he do or say anything that might cause shame or annoyance to others? Just because he is superior to others he need not rob them of the little honor or reputation due them. The Magnanimous Man expects to be respected by his inferiors in birth, capacity and goodness. He looks for respect from those whom he is treating well, not from those whom he has frightened into an attitude of respect.

He must be unable to make his life revolve around another, unless he be a friend; for this is slavish, and for this reason all flatterers are servile and people lacking in self respect are flatterers.<sup>36</sup>

Casual people are fond of flatterers; the Magnanimous Man, loving truth, hates flattery. He looks with pity on those who stoop so low and with equal pity on those who solace their wounded pride and shattered ambitions on the smooth phrases of flatterers. Friends are different. The Magnanimous Man is devoted to his friends. They think good the same things that he values. They are good tempered and not too ready to show him his mistakes. They praise his good qualities; they believe in his goodness and virtue. Their

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<sup>36</sup>E. N. 1124 b 30; 1125 a 2.

deference is respectful not servile. They do not try to thwart the Magnanimous Man in his aspirations nor to get in his way.

A slow step is thought proper to the Magnanimous Man, a deep voice and a level utterance; for the man who takes few things seriously is not likely to be hurried, nor the man who thinks nothing great to be excited, while a shrill voice and a rapid gait are the results of hurry and excitement.<sup>37</sup>

Calmness is one of the outstanding characteristics of the Magnanimous Man. Hurry and excitement are typical of man who are busy about many things, or who have undertaken either more or greater things than they can accomplish. The Magnanimous Man considers well an action before he undertakes it. He must make sure that it is worthy of his efforts (such things are not so numerous as to make him a busy man) and that it is proportioned to his ability. Once these conditions have been assured he proceeds with the quiet dignity becoming him to accomplish the work at hand. His is the easy consciousness of effortless superiority.

The Magnanimous Man whom we have been considering is one of the outstanding characters which Aristotle presents in the course of the Nicomachean Ethics. He is cultured, reasonable, self-controlled. He is conscious of himself as representative of an elite. He is a superior being. The essence of his superiority is moderation and wisdom, kindness and good sense, the 'nothing too much' as a counsel of perfection. With it goes the sense of obligation, of duty towards himself, his neighbor, the community, of leading the "good life" as an end in itself; almost one might say, for the sake of

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<sup>37</sup>E. N. IV, iii, 1125 a 13-16.

self-respect. The "good life" he sees as moderate, harmonious, balanced. With this moderate ideal there goes a reasoned pride, not exaggerated pride, that is bad form; it is "not done" by the Magnanimous Man.

He has achieved and he knows it, why pretend? He is a superior being as compared with others and he knows it. He surpasses them in exactly those qualities which he values; in control and moderation and self-respect. He knows what is due to himself and what is due to others and will, in so far as he lives up to his principles, take care to apportion their relative claims justly, but he will not be unfair to himself, or forego his rights, why should he? Undue humility is as distasteful to him as exaggerated pride.

His relations are all "relation-to-man" values; he is at his best in purely human relations so long as we do not endeavor to force him beyond the bounds that limit him, or to speak to him in a language he does not know. If we do that, we are stopped short, for he cannot function outside of his own medium; he cannot breathe another atmosphere; but here, on his own grounds, he is supreme.



## CHAPTER II

### THE MAGNANIMOUS MAN IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

In the Aristotelian moral code where what is morally good is essentially that which merits praise and honor, there was no doubt as to the virtue of a man who was concerned with honor "on the grand scale" and who was "good in the highest degree." The Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas is not going to have other concerns. St. Thomas is going to present us with just such a man but he is going to make an important distinction. The Magnanimous Man of the Summa Theologica is ever mindful of what the Magnanimous Man of the Nicomachean Ethics did not know, that in the order of good the initiative is always with God. Everything comes from God, even the Magnanimous Man's co-operation. He is intent upon great deeds, deeds worthy of the highest honors, but he knows that it is only with God and through Him that he will achieve.

The knowledge of this fundamental fact affects his attitude towards honor. Since magnanimity, from its very name implies a striving for great things, the Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas is going to be concerned chiefly with honor. Of the external goods that lay open to man's choice, he recognizes riches, honor and power as having the greatest appeal. Of these honor is the greatest since it approaches closest to virtue and witnesses to a man's virtue and because it is given to God and to the best and because men set

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<sup>1</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 129, a.1, c. "Magnanimitas ex suo nomine importat quamdam extensionem animi ad magna."

aside everything in order to win honor and to avoid shame they are ready to sacrifice all else.<sup>2</sup>

But it is not just with ordinary honors that the Magnanimous Man is concerned; it is with the greatest honors. That is what makes it a difficult virtue to practice. For the desirability of honor presents a serious threat to reason's command. So many snares lurk in the shadow of honor's attractiveness that a virtue regulative of honor is necessary. From the point of view of reason, it is difficult for a man to ascertain just how far he may go in his pursuit of honor. Likewise he gets little help from the matter of this virtue, for honor has a way of battering down the restraining check of reason.<sup>3</sup>

Honor is not the reward of virtue in the sense that the Magnanimous Man seeks it as his reward. The real reward of virtue is happiness which is the end of virtue. Honor is the reward of virtue only in as far as others are concerned, for men have nothing greater than honor to offer him. Yet this does not make honor an adequate reward.

Honor non est sufficiens virtutis praemium; sed nihil potest esse in humanis rebus et corporalibus majus honore, inquantum scilicet ipsae corporales res sunt signa demonstrativa excellentis virtutis.<sup>4</sup>

In this very insufficiency of honor as a reward of virtue there lies

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<sup>2</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 129, a.1, c. "Res autem quae in usum hominis veniunt sunt res exteriores; inter quas simpliciter maximum est honor, tum quia propinquissimum est virtuti, utpote testifatio quaedam existens de virtute aliqujus, ut supra habitum est tum etiam quia homines propter honorem consequendum, ut et vituperium vitandum, alia omnia postponunt."

<sup>3</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 129, a.2, c.

<sup>4</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 131, a.1, ad 2.

danger. The man who traffics in honor treads on dangerous ground. That St. Thomas realized that man needs a virtue governing his expectations of this witness of virtue from men is evident from the three ways which he enumerates in which the desire of honor may be inordinate. In the first place, a man may desire more than his share of honor. If the Magnanimous Man were to fail on this point he would by that very fact forfeit his claim to virtue, for there can be no virtue if the rule of reason is violated. Because he is striving for the greatest honors, it does not follow that there is no limit to the honor which he may claim. When we consider the absolute quantity of the honor toward which the Magnanimous Man tends, we must qualify it as extreme and the limit; but if the same honors are studied in the light of other circumstances, the rule of reason is seen to be safeguarded. The Magnanimous Man must seek the greatest honors for it is with such honors that Magnanimity is concerned, but he must seek them reasonably, that is where and when he ought.<sup>5</sup>

It is the moderation which reason injects into honor which establishes Magnanimity as a virtuous habit. The Magnanimous Man tends to great acts but in moderation. The moderation is not measured by the greatness of the acts because the Magnanimous Man aims at the greatest acts possible. Moderation is achieved by the Magnanimous Man in two ways: in his choice of the great and in his proportion to the great. With regard to his choice of the great, he seeks that which is simply or absolutely great; he does not seek honor as an end in itself; it is not the object of his will for he reckons it trivial

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<sup>5</sup> Sum. Theol. I-II, Q. 64, a.1, ad 2.

since it is an empty and passing good. It is for this reason that he does not care so much to be honored as to be worthy of honor, since honor is the witness to virtue. In the second place reason demands that the great deeds to which he tends be in proportion to his competency and his merits.

Magnanimitas mediocriter tendit in magna. Sed haec mediocritas non attenditur mediocritas in duobus: scilicet in electione magni et in proportionem sui ad magnum. In electione magni dico: quia tendit in id quod est magnum simpliciter quod est scilicet actus virtus perfectus; non autem tendit principaliter in id quod est magnum secundum quid, sicut sunt exteriora bona, inter quae praecipue magnum honor. Non enim magnanimus honorem quaerit tamquam finem voluntatis suae, quia hoc nimis sibi parvum reputat, cum sit vanum et transitorium bonum, sed fieri honore dignum secundum quod est testimonium virtutis.<sup>6</sup>

It is an excellent thing to aim high and to desire and value one's own honor, which, after virtue, is most worthy of our efforts; but it is an excellent thing only if a man proportions his desires and his efforts to his merits and his capacity. His limit must be the highest honor that reason tells him that he is worthy of.<sup>7</sup>

In the second place, he may desire honor for himself without referring it to God. Lastly, there is the danger that his desire for honor may lead him to rest in the honor itself, without using it to the profit of others.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>II Sent. Dist. 42, Q. 2, a.4, c.

<sup>7</sup>II Sent. Dist. 42, Q.2, a.4, c. "Inania gloria non tendit in id quod est magnum simpliciter, et quod magnanimitas per se quaerit, sed in magnum exterius, ut in laudem, vel honorem, vel aliquid huiusmodi; superbia vero tendit in magnum simpliciter, sed non secundum proportionem suam; . . ."

<sup>8</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 131, a.1, c. "Tripliciter autem appetitum contingit esse inordinatum: uno modo per hoc quod aliquis appetit testimonium de excellentia quam non habet, quod est appetere honorem supra suam proportionem; alio modo per hoc quod honorem sibi cupit, non referendo in Deum; tertio per hoc quod appetitus ejus in ipso honore quiescit, non referens honorem ad utilitatem aliorum."

St. Thomas does not point out the dangers without offering any remedy to offset them. He advances a two-fold solution to these difficulties. The Magnanimous Man must remember that he has not from himself that in which he excels. It is, as it were, something divine in him, and so honor, though, it is given to him, is due really to God. He may not stop over the honors that are accorded him; he may not rest in them. With the same movement with which he receives the honor he must pass it on to God to whom it is due.

The second point which St. Thomas bids the Magnanimous Man remember lest he be misled by honor is that the excellence which he has and which he possesses due to God's bounty, is a trust, given him not for himself, but that he may use it to the profit of others. He must answer for the honor entrusted to him. This implies on the one hand that there has been a trust made over to him, and on the other hand that there is a higher authority from whom it has been received and to whom the account is due.

Viewed thus, honor loses much of the danger with which it is charged. Yet the danger is not entirely removed. St. Thomas would have the Magnanimous Man penetrated with the thought that, "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish."<sup>9</sup> Magnanimity regards pursuit, the pursuit of honors. The Magnanimous Man must strive to do what is worthy of honor, yet not so as to think much of the honor accorded by men. St. Thomas seemed to think that the safety of the Magnanimous Man lay in his being humble. There is no other way of accounting for the importance which St. Thomas gives to humility in connection with magnanimity.

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<sup>9</sup>Phil. 2: 13.

In explaining the harmony between these two virtues which are apparently so contrary, St. Thomas' treatment recalls the "fortiter et suaviter" of Scripture. It is not to be honored by men that the Magnanimous Man strives for great things. It is true that he looks upon great honors as his due and as something that he deserves. Men should honor him. They can never sufficiently honor goodness which deserves to be honored by God and which is his thanks to the goodness of God.<sup>10</sup>

He is not puffed up by great honors because he does not deem them above him; rather he despises them. And so he is not cast down or discouraged by dishonor. He despises that, too, because he sees clearly that he does not deserve it.

Magnanimity concentrating on great works, moderates the expectations of honor. If his expectations are too great, a man will begin in despair to be satisfied with petty things. On the other hand, they must not be too small, for then he will refuse to undertake great things. It is magnanimity that makes the adjustment. The great things for which the Magnanimous Man is striving are difficult and at once attract and repel. They attract because of their goodness and repel because they are difficult to attain. With respect to their attractiveness, hope surges up to urge him on. Magnanimity approaches closer to hope than can be said of any other virtue. This is because it is the direction of the appetite to a good that is difficult to obtain and therefore it turns on hope and its opposite.<sup>11</sup> At the same time

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<sup>10</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 129, a.2, ad 3.

<sup>11</sup>II Sent. Dist. XXVI, Q. 2, a.2, ad 4.

despair looms up to hold him back. Hope and despair are motions, surgings of the sensitive appetite: the one pursuing a good that in spite of its difficulties is judged possible; the other fleeing from good because its very difficulty makes it appear impossible of attainment. In this situation a man has need of a holy boldness: a two-fold virtue with respect to the difficult good: one to temper and restrain his mind lest it tend to great things immoderately, and the other to strengthen his mind against despair and urge him on to the pursuit of great things according to reason. The one virtue is humility, the other magnanimity. St. Thomas considers them as a two-fold virtue, the one the obvert of the other.

Et ideo circa appetitum boni ardui necessaria est duplex virtus. Una quidem quae temperet et refrenet animam, ne immoderate tendat in excelso; et hoc pertinet ad virtutem humilitatis. Alia vero quae firmet animam contra desperationem magnorum secundum rectam; et haec est magnanimitas.<sup>12</sup>

At first sight the two virtues seem to imply a contradiction. Humility implies praiseworthy self-abasement to the lowest place.<sup>13</sup> Magnanimity aims at great deeds worthy of honor. How are we to reconcile these two virtues, the one of which aims at great things while the other shuns them? St. Thomas does it by showing that humility and magnanimity, though they differ as to their formal object, have the same material object. Humility restrains a man from aiming at great things against right reason: magnanimity urges him on to great things in accord with right reason. Magnanimity is, then, not opposed to humility for they concur in this, that each is according to right

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<sup>12</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 161, a.1, c.

<sup>13</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 161, a.1, ad 2.

reason.<sup>14</sup>

However, although they agree as to the matter, they differ as to the mode. The humble man subjects and abases himself from the consideration of his own fragility, while the Magnanimous Man aims at great things from the consideration of God's help and His gifts.<sup>15</sup>

Gilson aptly remarks of magnanimity:

It is a tight rope that this virtue walks, for to believe ourselves able to reach what is above our heads is presumption; to believe ourselves worthy of an honor not in line with our true merit is ambition; to like honors won on false titles or as seen by man's fallible mind, or for any other end than God's honor or man's good, is vain and empty glory.<sup>16</sup>

In virtue of his being humble, the Magnanimous Man recognizes his true position with respect to his Creator and his fellow creatures and he is disposed to shape his conduct accordingly. Humility is the true expression in thought and conduct of what a man really is. Hence it is based on truth. It is not false self-depreciation.<sup>17</sup> It is possible for him to have the full perfection of the virtue and yet be perfectly aware of his endowments. Humility is not merely thinking little of one's self. It is rather not think-

<sup>14</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 161, a.1, ad 3. "Humilitas reprimit appetitum ne tendat in magna praeter rationem rectam; magnanimitas autem animum ad magna impellit secundum rationem rectam. Unde patet quod magnanimitas non opponitur humilitati; sed conveniunt in hoc quod utraque est secundum rationem rectam."

<sup>15</sup>III Sent. Dist. XXXIII, Q. 2, a.1, ad 3. "Humilitas autem habet idem pro materia quod magnanimitas, quamvis sub diversis rationibus; quia humilitas rationem parvi ex consideratione propriae fragilitatis, sed magnanimitas rationem magni ex consideratione divini auxilii, vel divini doni, vel gratuiti, vel naturalis, sicut est rationis bonum."

<sup>16</sup>Etienne Gilson. Moral Values and the Moral Life, St. Louis, Herder, 1931, 283-4.

<sup>17</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 169, a.1, ad 2.



ing of self at all. That is why the Magnanimous Man is not puffed up by great honors, nor depressed if honor is not given him. He is not thinking of himself. Magnanimity makes him deem himself worthy of great things in consideration of the gifts he holds from God.<sup>18</sup> Humility prevents him from aspiring after what is beyond him and so making himself ridiculous, as well as subjecting himself to that to which he should not be subject and so degrading himself.

For St. Thomas there can be no question of classifying magnanimity under justice, for although the Magnanimous Man should be honored and honor is his due, yet it cannot be due him in justice because he has not of himself that to which honor is accorded. Rather, St. Thomas classifies magnanimity as a secondary virtue under fortitude. Without being in a proper sense identified with the virtue of fortitude, magnanimity is yet related to it and dependent on it. Fortitude, like the other cardinal virtues, can be taken in two ways: first, as simply denoting a certain firmness of mind, and as such, it is a condition of every virtue; secondly, fortitude may be taken to denote firmness only in bearing and withstanding those dangers in which it is most difficult to stand firm.<sup>19</sup>

There is a difference in the difficulties in which the brave man and the

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<sup>18</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 129, a.3, ad 4. "Magnanimitas ergo facit quod homo se magnis dignificet secundum considerationem donorum quae possidet ex Deo."

<sup>19</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 123, a.2, c. "Nomen fortitudinis dupliciter accipi potest: uno modo secundum quod absolute importat quamdam animi firmitatem, et secundum hoc est generalis virtus, vel potius conditio cujus libet virtutis. . . Alio modo potest accipi fortitudo secundum quod importat firmitatem tantum in sustinendis et repelendis his in quibus maxime difficile est firmitatem habere, scilicet in aliquibus periculis gravibus."

Magnanimous Man must stand firm. Honors are difficult to get, even though a man be worthy of them. The Magnanimous Man must have firmness of soul, not of course, so much as to face death, which is the principal act of fortitude, but enough to stand up against the obstacles that block his way and would prevent him from accomplishing the great deeds at which he aims.<sup>20</sup>

Lest we get the impression that because the Magnanimous Man is firm in resisting the obstacles that oppose his accomplishment of great deeds, he is unduly aggressive, St. Thomas stresses the importance of confidence in the character of the Magnanimous Man. Confidence is allied to faith and hope. It is allied to faith because it pertains to faith to believe something and in somebody. It is not in himself and in his own ability and merits that the Magnanimous Man believes; his faith is in God and in the divine assistance without which he knows that he can do nothing.<sup>21</sup> His faith is not complacent belief in his own ability and merits. He has the power to perform great deeds, it is true, and as far as his own ability is concerned, he has confidence in himself, but he realizes that it is in God that he can do all things. He realizes that it surpasses man to need nothing at all. In the first place he needs the help of God since no man can accomplish anything without the divine assistance. He needs the help of others, also, and in so far as he has need of others, it belongs to the Magnanimous Man to have confidence in them.<sup>22</sup>

Confidence is allied to hope in that confidence denotes the hope of

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<sup>20</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 129, a.5, c.

<sup>21</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 129, a.6, c.

<sup>22</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 129, a.6, ad 1.

having something, not a groundless hope, but one that is based on a consideration alike of the great deeds to be done and his ability to do them. The Magnanimous Man is strong in hope that he will achieve the good on which he is intent. He will do what lies in his power.<sup>23</sup> What lies beyond it, God will do.

Confidence gives security. The great works are God's; so is the honor that follows on their accomplishment. The Magnanimous Man is not dispensed from labor and thought, but from trouble of mind. Although perfect security will be a part of virtue's reward, yet here and now the Magnanimous Man is secure. Nothing can disturb his peace of mind.<sup>23</sup>

The confidence and security of the Magnanimous Man are expressions of the truest and most Christian attitude of soul, and the most spiritual: "rejoicing in hope." He has reached the serene spiritual joy which rejoices in hope of the unseen, the unpossessed. He has let go of earthly things; for as long as a man is clutching at them to give him comfort, support, entertainment, he has no peace. This is evident in his attitude toward goods of fortune. They are not so important that the Magnanimous Man should be unduly disturbed about them, nor are they so unimportant that he should disregard them completely. If he were to be destitute of the goods of fortune he would not be less virtuous, but his virtue might be less effective.<sup>24</sup> He realizes that man is dependent on external goods, and that it is his duty to acquire the material means that are necessary for the maintenance of life. Shift-

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<sup>23</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 129, a.7, c. et ad 3.

<sup>24</sup>Sum. Theol. II-II, Q. 129, a.8, ad 1 et 2.

lessness and improvidence are not virtues. Striving for wealth is not, however, an obligation. His attitude toward external goods is one of detachment and indifference because they are only means and ought to be sought only to the extent that they serve higher ends. Nothing enslaves man more than a desire for riches. The men who aim at the accumulation of wealth miss the finer things of life. For him, the accumulation of riches would prove a real obstacle to higher achievement. In using the goods of fortune toward the accomplishment of great deeds, the Magnanimous Man will manifest a fine scorn for them. It is a sign of nobility of mind to make little of material goods.

Such is the Magnanimous Man as St. Thomas presents him. That he is a man of no ordinary virtue should be evident. Doubtless such men are needed, for there are great works to be done; but not all men are magnanimous. How is a man to go about becoming magnanimous? To be simply virtuous, a man must be inclined to do some kind of good deed. This inclination may be either natural or he may train himself to do what is good.<sup>25</sup> In either event, he will be in possession of the natural moral virtues, which through prudence are bound together; but he need not necessarily be magnanimous. Magnanimity raises a man above the common level and because occasion is not offered to all men for practice in the matter of this virtue, a man can have the other moral virtues without having magnanimity. His virtue is limited to lifting him up to the level of common duties, such virtues as a man must have to live an ordinary life. Not all men are worthy of great honor and great deeds are not

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<sup>25</sup>Sum. Theol. I-II, Q. 65, a.1, c. "Aliqua inclinatio in nobis existens ad opus aliquod de genere bonorum faciendum."

in proportion to the capacity of all men. But the fact that a man has not magnanimity does not detract from the other moral virtues which he may possess. All the same, if he has acquired the other moral virtues, he has the virtue of magnanimity virtually. If he performs the works that present themselves, and that are proportioned to his merits and his capacity to the best of his ability, when the great deeds after which the Magnanimous Man strives come his way, he will be both ready and worthy. If he uses small and ordinary honors well he will not be in danger of succumbing to the attractiveness of great honors.<sup>26</sup>

Such a man would be magnanimous but his would be natural acquired magnanimity. He would still fall short of the ideal of the Magnanimous Man as St. Thomas portrays him. He would, by his own efforts, have acquired virtues that would produce good works directed to an end not surpassing his natural powers. St. Thomas would hold that his virtue was imperfect, not completely realizing the notion of virtue.<sup>27</sup> He has need of the theological virtues, infused by God into the soul, perfect virtues, because they direct him to his end of ends. For man's happiness is not limited to this world alone. There is a happiness proportioned to his human nature which he can obtain by means of the natural virtues. But there is a happiness which surpasses all his powers and which he can obtain by the power of God alone and for the attainment of which the natural virtues are of no avail. He must receive from God additional help by means of the theological virtues which have God as their

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<sup>26</sup>Sum. Theol. I-II, Q. 65, a.1, ad 1.

<sup>27</sup>Sum. Theol. I-II, Q. 65, a.1, c. "Habitus inclinans ad bonum opus bene agendum."

object and direct a man to Him.<sup>28</sup>

Recognizing an end that surpasses his natural powers and striving after the great things that are in proportion to his supernatural last end, aided thereto by the grace of God and referring the consequent honor to God, he becomes the Magnanimous Man as St. Thomas has presented him. To him God is the key to life and to happiness. Temporal life centered in itself would be unsatisfactory and puzzling to him. It would not bear the mark of finality. Taken by itself life points to something beyond itself, to a vast finality, to spiritual and eternal destinies, to ultimate triumphs. He is a citizen of two worlds, one temporal and one eternal. There are great deeds to be done in the one but they get their value from the other.

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<sup>28</sup>Sum. Theol. I-II, Q. 62, a.1, c.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MAGNANIMOUS MAN OF ARISTOTLE AND THE MAGNANIMOUS MAN OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

In considering the Magnanimous Man as he is presented by Aristotle and then by St. Thomas the likenesses are perhaps more striking than the differences. The Magnanimous Man of the Nicomachean Ethics and the Magnanimous Man of the Summa Theologica often act in the same way, make the same moral judgments; they are both virtuous, both concerned with great deeds and the consequent honors; they are both honorable and just. With the Greek as with the Christian what he prizes is intangible, immaterial; they are both unselfish; they may be equally so, but the Magnanimous Man of Aristotle is satisfied, the Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas not at all so. The Greek was pledged to the ideal of honor, of the good; but to him the ideal was attainable; it would have been his fault and his disappointment if he had failed to attain it. But he did attain it. He is a man of honor, a good citizen, a good human being. He knows it and he is content.

The Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas, on the other hand, measures himself by quite another standard,--not according to human excellence but in relation to God. He is a citizen, but of another city. The idea of God becomes, to him, more real, more absorbing in proportion as he himself draws nearer to Him. He is living his life as it were in a new dimension, in which the goodness he has attained seems negligible, non-existent, in comparison with the goodness he apprehends.

The difference in the standard of measurement of the two men is perhaps one of the most striking. For Aristotle, external conduct was the basis of worthiness. "That which is praised is good."<sup>1</sup> This accounts for the fact that in portraying the character of the Magnanimous Man Aristotle gave such a wealth of minute details: his intercourse with others, his attitudes, the impressions he created, his walk, the tone of his voice; all details, but all important because for Aristotle this was virtue. The Magnanimous Man of the Nicomachean Ethics assessed himself by a high standard of value, but it was the value in which he himself excelled.

With St. Thomas there was poverty of detail but a wealth of emphasis. The Magnanimous Man was good in the highest degree, but he owed his goodness to God. Honor, was his due, but the honor was referred to God. He practiced the greatest acts of all the virtues but they were united and crowned by charity. He is living his life, here and now, in relation to the supernatural life, in a medium unknown to the Magnanimous Man of Aristotle. For the Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas internal rectitude is substituted for external conduct as the basis of worthiness. For him, goodness consists radically in the internal choice.<sup>2</sup> His will is directed to an overruling end, "to a transcendent principle worthy of all honor in itself and absolutely, more truly even than virtue, which is honorable on account of this."<sup>3</sup> Virtue was the be all and the end all of the Aristotelian Magnanimous Man. It was desired for itself and not for the sake of anything else. With St. Thomas virtue is desired

<sup>1</sup>Rhet. I, vi, 1363 a 9.

<sup>2</sup>Summa Theologica, II-II, Q. 145, a.1, ad 3.

<sup>3</sup>Etienne Gilson, op. cit., 325.



that all the attributes ascribed to the supremely happy man can have no place in a life given to great deeds. Getting and safeguarding deserved honor is quite a task; acquiring and disposing of goods of fortune after the manner of a Magnanimous Man is likewise no slight matter. There are these and other distractions to prevent the Magnanimous Man from giving himself up to a life of contemplation. Ordained to the vita civilis, he is one of those who must take care of the world.

For the Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas it is different. He, too, is a citizen, but he is not only a citizen of the earthly city, but he is also a member of the heavenly city, of that heavenly Jerusalem whose prince is God and whose citizens are the angels and all the saints, whether they reign in glory and are stationed in the homeland, or are still in pilgrimage on this earth.

Homo non solum est civis terrenae civitatis, sed est particeps civitatis caelestis Jerusalem, cujus rector est Dominus, et cives Angeli et sancti omnes, sive adhuc peregrinantur in terris. . .<sup>9</sup>

The Magnanimous Man of the Summa Theologica is in via; he has here no abiding city; but it is going to require more than the natural virtues with which Aristotle equipped the Magnanimous Man in order that he reach his journey's end. For a man to be a member of this city, nature is not enough; he must be lifted up by God's grace. Furthermore, it is clear that the virtues necessary for this final achievement he cannot acquire by his own natural powers. The homeland is in an order that cannot be reached by his greatest

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<sup>9</sup>De Virt. in communi. Q. a. 9, c.

efforts. These virtues must be infused in him by God.<sup>10</sup>

St. Thomas takes into account at once the orders of nature and of grace. The infused moral virtues proportion the Magnanimous Man's actions to his eternal end. The proper field of these virtues is that of eternal life begun with life on earth. St. Thomas does not disparage the vita civilis, but he clearly recognizes that it is not the end of life. For the right living of civil life a man has need of virtues that will temper his actions to that temporal end, the good of the state.

Virtutes morales acquisitae dirigunt in vita civili, unde habent bonum civile pro fine.<sup>11</sup>

These are the acquired moral virtues which he shares with the Magnanimous Man of the Nicomachean Ethics. By them the virtuous activity of both men is proportioned to their temporal end.

The Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas has need of these acquired moral virtues. His human nature is no different from that of Aristotle's Magnanimous Man, nor does his temporal end differ from that of his predecessor. But his acquired virtue has need of infused virtue to carry him beyond civil life, which belongs to the natural order, to his supernatural last end.

Of the two men, the Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas will most likely be the better citizen; will guide and direct his temporal life with a greater measure of success than will the Magnanimous Man of Aristotle. The strength

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<sup>10</sup>Idem. "Ad hoc autem quod homo hujus civitatis sit particeps, non sufficit sua natura, sed ad hoc elevatur per gratiam Dei. Nam manifestum est quod virtutes illae quae sunt hominis in quantum est hujus civitatis particeps, non possunt ab eo acquiri per sua naturalia: unde non causantur ab actibus nostris sed ex divino munere in nobis infunduntur."

<sup>11</sup>III Sent. Dist. 33, Q. 1, a.4, c.

of the latter is measured by that supplied him by the acquired moral virtues. The Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas has in addition to the acquired moral virtues, sanctifying grace, charity, and the infused moral virtues. The acts of the acquired virtues which he performs in the temporal order are elevated by charity and the corresponding infused virtues.

Although they live and work side by side as citizens of the earthly city, the temporal life of the Aristotelian Magnanimous Man, the good life in the state, has a temporal end. The life and activity of the Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas is referred to a supernatural end.

With Aristotle moral philosophy was subordinated to politics. Moral philosophy found its realization in political philosophy. It was the function of moral philosophy to make good citizens and the end of the virtuous man was the happy life in the state. Moral philosophy fulfilled its end in dealing with the human acts of man ordained to a temporal life and natural ends.

St. Thomas would hold, on the other hand, that the Magnanimous Man of Aristotle would be in danger of missing the attainment of his natural end. He maintains that man only orders his life efficaciously for its natural last end if he also orders it efficaciously for its supernatural last end. For St. Thomas political philosophy has to make room for the consideration of the last end to which political life has reference indirectly.

For St. Thomas Aquinas the Magnanimous Man was not only human, he was also divine. He had an end that was human and temporal, but he had at the same time an end that was divine. The Magnanimous Man needed the best natural

equipment in the way of the acquired virtues that he could get to insure his temporal end but he needed also sanctifying grace and the infused virtues to insure the attainment of his supernatural end. St. Thomas knew this because he was "philosophizing in the faith." The Magnanimous Man of St. Thomas has his abode in a Summa of Theology. It was St. Thomas the philosopher who in dealing with the Magnanimous Man was dealing with the direction of that man's human acts, but it was St. Thomas the Theologian that supplied the fact that the Magnanimous Man's last end is supernatural.

The contrast between these two men we may take as an emphasis on other worldly values as opposed to this-worldly, on eternal as against temporal; on supernatural as against natural, or including and summing up all the alternatives, recognition of God as the ultimate reality of life, or man. This seems to be the essential difference underlying and dominating all others.

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